A meeting of the Housing, Health and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel was held at the Town Hall, Nuneaton, on Tuesday 8th January, 2013.

Present

Councillor S. Doughty – Chair


An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. P. Grant.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting held on 11th December, 2012, be confirmed.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor C.M. Watkins declared an Other Interest in any relevant item by reason of him being a board member of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Leisure Trust.

The George Eliot Hospital Update

The Panel received an update from Kevin McGee, Chief Executive of George Eliot Hospital on how it is working to improve services, bring down mortality levels, and is looking for a partner to secure its long term future.

Members were informed that the Government requires all Hospitals to reach Foundation Trust Status by 2014. George Eliot Hospital, like many other smaller general district hospitals, was unlikely to meet the required criteria on its own. Therefore the George Eliot Hospital Board had agreed that it is in the best interests of the hospital, patients and staff to seek a
partner via a competitive procurement process to achieve financial and clinical sustainability.

The procurement process invites interested organisations from NHS and non-NHS organisations to submit a bid, which will be evaluated against agreed criteria. The bids will be for two options – either a merger and acquisition or an operating franchise. The organisations will be judged particularly on how they intend to protect local services for local people in the future and how they can demonstrate this.

A franchise would involve the George Eliot Hospital entering into a contact with a franchisee, NHS or non NHS for a set period of time. All staff and assets would remain within the NHS and the Trust Board would ensure that it met its obligations under their contract.

An acquisition or merger would involve another NHS organisation taking over the activities of the Hospital. All assets, staff and contracts would transfer to the acquiring Trust.

Members were assured that the whole process would be open and transparent, and that there was no preferred solution. The public and local groups are being involved in the process and there will be many ways in which they can feed in their ideas.

The Board should be in a position to put forward recommendations of a preferred partner to the Department of Health and Treasury by November/December 2014 and it is hoped that a new partner would be identified in February/March 2014. Therefore a new organisation is unlikely to be in existence until July 2014.

Panel Members were concerned about how the Trust intended to reduce mortality figures and improve services. Assurances were given that George Eliot Hospital was managing well despite having to deal with more patients than predicted over what is a typically busy month for all medical staff. There were few free beds, and high numbers of patients attending the Accident and Emergency department. The Hospital has taken action to reduce mortality figures by increasing the doctor/nurse ratio and changing contracts of medical staff to make them work seven days a week.

In terms of improving services, the Hospital had recently attracted a Senior Clinician from the North East to develop a new Paediatric model, and wished to improve the range of services available to patients for the whole week including Pathology and Radiology.
RESOLVED that

(a) Kevin McGee be thanked for the update and his attendance at the meeting and his offer to attend future meetings to provide further updates be noted.

294 Health Inequalities Review Report

The report of Councillor C.M. Watkins, Chair of the Health Inequalities Group was considered. This was to report on the findings of the Health Inequalities Working Group and to make a number of recommendations for approval by Cabinet.

RESOLVED that

(a) the report be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration and approval;

(b) thanks be passed to Officers who helped to produce the Health Inequalities Review report.

295 Work Programme, 2012/13

The Principal Democratic Services Officer (Committees) discussed the Work Programme for 2012/13

RESOLVED that

(a) the New Homes Bonus be discussed at this Committee and that a report is compiled on what the bonus can be spent on;

(b) an update is provided on the Museum Café;

(c) the Empty Property Strategy be discussed at the meeting on the 18th February 2013.

296 Any Other Items

Leisure Trust Annual Report on Performance April 2011 – March 2012 (Discussed as an agenda item on 20th September 2012)

The Principal Democratic Services Officer (Committees) circulated
evidence from the Chief Executive of the Leisure Trust, as requested at a previous meeting.

_________________________
Chair